



Spotlighting Rural Women in Sustainable Innovation

Policy Brief

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FLIARA Ambassadors during the 3rd FLIARA CoP



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Spotlighting Rural Women in Sustainable Innovation

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“Spotlighting rural women engaged in sustainable innovation strengthens networks, fosters experience exchange, and empowers them to unlock their potential”

Executive Summary

Rural women play a crucial role in sustainable agricultural innovation, yet their contributions often go unrecognized. This policy brief highlights a proven method to spotlight these women, strengthen their networks, and enhance visibility. By selecting key female innovators, documenting their experiences, and fostering a supportive community, this approach promotes knowledge exchange and leadership. Lessons from the FLIARA project demonstrate that regional and national initiatives can be equally effective, with informal networking preferred. Policymakers should support tailored programs that empower female innovators, facilitate peer learning, and ensure accessibility through localized engagement strategies.

The Challenge

- 🏠 Women working in farming in rural areas are often not seen beyond a limited group of insiders.
- 🏠 Although many women have extensive networks there are also issue in relation to networks between women active in innovative work.
- 🏠 There is a lack of female role-models in farming and rural areas. So this is important: “If You See It, You Can Be It.”

Policy Solutions

Select women that take key role in sustainability innovations in farming and rural areas.

- ✎ Consider multiple dimensions of sustainability (economic, environmental, cultural).
- ✎ Use an assessment framework (see Initial Case Study Assessment and Selection Framework for an example).
- ✎ Make a good choice on the geographical area to like to address. This can be regional, national, etc. All choices are good, but it is good to make a choice.

Talk with these women on their innovation journeys

- ✎ Ensure their participation is based on informed consent.
- ✎ Use a semi-structured interview approach to cover all relevant topics while allowing women to share their experiences in their own narrative.
- ✎ Capture photographs as part of the documentation.

Make a one-page profile of the women's innovative activities.

- ✎ Use a standard layout that includes text and visuals.
- ✎ Obtain consent from the women using a designated form.
- ✎ Publish the profiles on a website and social media.

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Select ambassadors among the women considering

- ✎ Availability for workshops
- ✎ Strong communication skills
- ✎ Diverse representation of women and innovation journeys
- ✎ Buddies assigned as primary contacts for ambassadors

Organize community of practice events with ambassadors and others.

- ✎ Discuss innovations
- ✎ Focus on solutions and learning experiences rather than just problems
- ✎ Capture video clips and photos for social media
- ✎ Involve policymakers and other stakeholders
- ✎ Share outcomes through various media channels



Supporting Evidence & Best Practices

This approach was successfully implemented in the **HORIZON EUROPE** project **FLIARA** (Female-Led Innovation in Agriculture and Rural Areas). The initiative engaged women from 10 EU Member States and established regional communities of practice across Europe (Atlantic, Mediterranean, Nordic, CEE). The results indicate that this model can be equally effective at national or regional levels.

However, language barriers limited participation for some highly innovative women, as English was required for communication. Additionally, the high cost of long-distance travel posed challenges, suggesting that a smaller geographical focus may be more practical and impactful. Given the diverse farming and environmental contexts across Europe, highlighting women innovating within the same region may offer greater relevance and inspiration.




Another key insight was the preference for **informal social media networking (WhatsApp)** over more structured professional platforms like **LinkedIn**, which was initially provided by the FLIARA team.

Conclusion & Call to Action

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Empowering rural women in sustainable innovation strengthens agricultural resilience and fosters inclusive progress. The success of the FLIARA project highlights the effectiveness of spotlighting female innovators, facilitating networking, and engaging policymakers. Regional and national initiatives can replicate this model, ensuring accessibility and relevance.

CALL TO ACTION:

-  Policymakers should fund localized programs supporting female-led innovation.
-  Organizations must prioritize informal networking channels to enhance engagement.
-  Stakeholders should facilitate mentorship, training, and visibility opportunities

By investing in these strategies, we can amplify women's contributions and drive meaningful, sustainable change in rural communities

Further Reading

www.fliara.eu

[Innovators - FLIARA Project](#)

[Ambassadors - FLIARA Project](#)

Initial Guidelines for Case Study Assessment and Selection <https://zenodo.org/records/14045179>

Silvia Sivini, Annie Roos, & Irene Leonardelli. (2024). D.3.3: Women-led Innovations in Agriculture and Rural Areas, Lessons Learned Report and Fact Sheets on Female Innovations. FLIARA. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14045390>

Strategic Action Plan <https://zenodo.org/records/14045414>



About FLIARA

The project is on a mission to create a more sustainable future by highlighting the role of women in agriculture and rural areas. FLIARA will boost understanding of the needs and challenges facing women leading innovative environmental and rural development practices in EU farming and rural areas.

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Female-Led Innovation in Agriculture and Rural Areas

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